

CITY OF MUSKEGON  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

**August 16, 2018**

Chairperson T. Michalski called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: T. Michalski, J. Montgomery-Keast, B. Mazade, S. Gawron, J. Doyle, F. Peterson, E. Hood, B. Larson

MEMBERS ABSENT: M. Hovey-Wright, excused

STAFF PRESENT: M. Franzak, D. Renkenberger

OTHERS PRESENT: J. Fox, 394 Houston Ave; L. Spataro, 1567 6<sup>th</sup> St; S. Rodarte, 444 Houston Ave; J. Witmer, Community enCompass; K. Knight, 406 Houston & 1148 6<sup>th</sup> St; B. Krick, 1762 Jefferson; B. Dodge, 90 W Larch Ave; B. Kendrick, 314 Monroe Ave; H. Chavers, 294 Monroe Ave; D. Hippchen, 325 Monroe Ave.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the Minutes of the special Planning Commission meeting of July 12, 2018, was made by J. Montgomery-Keast, supported by B. Larson and unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Hearing, Case 2018-25: Request for preliminary Planned Unit Development approval for a mixed-use development at 3400, 3460, 3474 Wilcox Ave, 1875 Waterworks Rd and 1490 Edgewater St, by MiCOAST Properties, LLC. The application for this case was withdrawn by the applicant.

Hearing, Case 2018-26: Staff-initiated request to rezone 372, 380, 388, 394, 398, 406, and 414 Houston Ave; 1246, 1252 and 1258 5<sup>th</sup> St; 235, 239, 240, 250 and 254 Monroe Ave; and 1148 6<sup>th</sup> St from R-3, High Density Single Family Residential to Form Based Code, Urban Residential (FBC-UR). M. Franzak presented the staff report. Staff is proposing the following rezonings from dense single-family residential to dense multi-family residential to accommodate some new projects. These locations are already located near multi-family homes and should fit in nicely with the existing neighborhood. Community enCompass would like to build a new four-unit home on the vacant lot at 380 Houston Ave. This lot previously held a four-unit home before it was demolished. Half of this block is already zoned FBC-UR and hosts several large homes. This block could adequately support larger homes with the large alley and lots that could support multiple cars parking in the rear. Community enCompass also owns two of the three lots at 1246-1258 5<sup>th</sup> St., with the County of Muskegon owning the other parcel. They have proposed five row houses on these parcels. This type of development fits these parcels well, as they are too small to accommodate multiple single-family homes. The only type of home that would fit on these lots

would be a single ranch, which is not compatible with the neighborhood. A rendering of the proposed row housing was provided. The City owns the lots at 235-254 Monroe Ave. There is currently a Request for Proposals (RFP) out for this potential development, and the City is encouraging dense single family homes, including row houses and cottage courtyard-style buildings. Although multi-family zoning is not required for these projects, the FBC-UR designation will allow for these building types. Renderings of possible building layouts were provided. Staff recommends approval of the rezonings to allow for more housing options in the neighborhood.

M. Franzak explained the “missing middle” housing concept as it related to this request. Community enCompass had plans to build homes in that area, as did the City of Muskegon. M. Franzak provided a map showing the lots on Monroe Ave that the City owned. L. Spataro stated that he was the president of the Nelson Neighborhood Improvement Association (NNIA) and spoke on their behalf. They had discussed the proposal and took no formal position on it, positive or negative. He stated that single-family homeowners had expressed concerns about their property values being negatively affected. S. Rodarte was opposed to the request for multi-family homes, stating that single family homes were needed. He was also concerned with property values and believed that multi-family units would have an adverse effect on those. He stated that several other multi-unit properties in the area needed attention, and he was not in favor of adding any new ones. F. Peterson stated that the area was a transition point from downtown to residential living areas, and the City’s aim was to bring value and diversity to the neighborhood. Many of the lots proposed for rezoning were vacant lots, and had been for some time. J. Montgomery-Keast asked what Community enCompass planned to do with their lots, and when they intended to build. M. Franzak stated that they would like to build a fourplex, for which there were several different design options. J. Witmer from Community enCompass stated that they were currently in the process of applying for funds and would start building once those were secured. K. Knight stated that his family had a long history in the area and he liked the single family feel there. He was in favor of development, but not multi-family homes. B. Krick stated that neighborhood residents had worked hard to clean up the area and make it more desirable. He was opposed to row houses and any fourplex units. He was also concerned about parking and urged the Planning Commissioners to consider the direction the neighborhood was going. B. Dodge concurred with Mr. Krick and was opposed to multi-family housing as well. He did not want to see the area return to its former state, with dilapidated housing stock. B. Kendrick stated that he had purchased one of the new Midtown Square homes in the area and had concerns with multi-family housing, such as density and parking issues. He stated that the Midtown Square development was single family homes and already had a nice diversity. H. Chavers stated that he chose a home in Midtown Square due to the standards shown, and he wanted to see the City maintain those standards, with single family homes. D. Hippchen lived adjacent to Midtown Square and was happy with the improvements in the neighborhood. She had seen others improving their properties and hoped the trend would continue with more quality single family homes. She was opposed to multi-family housing and stated that a fourplex was too dense for the small lots. She believed that homeowners generally tended to maintain their properties better than renters. J. Fox stated that he lived in the area and preferred single family homes, as he believed it made the area more stable. M. Franzak explained that R-3 and FBC-UR zoning districts were similar, but FBC-UR allowed more varied types of housing such as cottage courtyard and row house-style buildings. B. Dodge asked if the proposal conformed to the City’s Master Plan. M. Franzak stated that it did, as the plan called for the area to serve as a transitional zone between downtown and single family areas. L. Spataro stated that

they needed to consider whether the most intensive use allowed in the proposed zoning was the best fit for the residences next door.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by B. Larson, supported by J. Montgomery-Keast and unanimously approved.

J. Doyle asked if each unit in a row house was individually owned. M. Franzak stated that that was typically true. B. Mazade had concerns about how this rezoning would affect the Fifth Street project. T. Michalski stated that he concurred with the homeowners and was not comfortable with the proposal. He stated that anything more than a duplex would be out of place. B. Mazade stated that he understood the concerns of the neighbors. He was comfortable with the options presented with the exception of row houses. J. Montgomery-Keast concurred with T. Michalski. She stated that she liked to see the development but would like to see a more definite plan. F. Peterson stated that the problem house in this area had been a single family home. Although Midtown Square was a great development, it was not sustainable for the City to continue building those types of houses. The way to make future projects more sustainable was to have a higher density and lower price point; more urban-thinking and less suburban. A development with different types of housing would be more inclusive, as many people could not afford single family homes like the Midtown Square development. T. Michalski suggested putting together a committee to discuss the issues, including representatives of the NNIA. S. Gawron stated that more education and illustration regarding the styles of proposed housing and where those types of projects were currently successful was needed. He stated that the cottage and townhouse concepts were working in other areas of West Michigan. He asked M. Franzak to explain the difference between the R-3 and FBC-UR zoning. M. Franzak stated that the R3 zoning allowed only single family homes. The purpose of the FBC-UR zoning would be to allow some multi-family homes that were built to be just that, not single family homes that had been chopped up into smaller units. FBC-UR also allowed different styles of homes. S. Gawron stated that the City was looking for options for quality projects to fill the odd-sized lots that would otherwise be difficult to build on, in order to reestablish traditional neighborhoods and energize the area. However, if neighbors were not comfortable with the options as presented, more discussion was warranted. T. Michalski stated that tabling the request would allow time for further discussion with the neighborhood. J. Montgomery-Keast reiterated that she was in favor of development but would like more information. F. Peterson stated that staff from DPZ CoDESIGN, a nationally renowned planning and design firm, had recently spent a lot of time in Muskegon. They stated that what provided the most value in a neighborhood was having areas where people could live together in a mixed-use environment. The way to have strong neighborhoods was to provide multiple options to include people of different economic levels. F. Peterson explained that the City was not looking to make this entire area into multi-family, only select lots. B. Mazade stated that he could understand the neighbors' concerns, and suggested separating the Monroe Avenue lots from the others.

A motion to table this request was made by J. Montgomery-Keast and failed due to lack of support.

A motion to deny this request was made by B. Larson and failed due to lack of support.

A motion that the request to rezone 235, 239, 240, 250 and 254 Monroe Avenue from R-3, High Density Single Family Residential to Form Based Code, Urban Residential be recommended to the City Commission for approval was made by B. Mazade, supported by F. Peterson and

approved, with J. Montgomery-Keast, B. Mazade, S. Gawron B. Larson, J. Doyle, F. Peterson, and E. Hood voting aye, and T. Michalski voting nay.

B. Larson asked what the rationale was for approving a portion of the request. B. Mazade stated that the Monroe addresses were proposed as single family dwellings, while the others would allow multi-family units.

A motion to table the request to rezone 372, 380, 388, 394, 398, 406, and 414 Houston Avenue; 1246, 1252 and 1258 5th St; and 1148 6th St from R-3, High Density Single Family Residential to Form Based Code, Urban Residential was made by B. Mazade, supported by B. Larson and approved, with J. Montgomery-Keast, B. Mazade, B. Larson, J. Doyle, T. Michalski and E. Hood voting aye, and S. Gawron and F. Peterson voting nay.

L. Spataro invited the Planning Commissioners to engage with the NNIA on these kinds of issues.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

### **OTHER**

Master Plan Update – M. Franzak stated that staff was working on updating the Master Plan and would be going to the neighborhood associations for their input.

“The Docks” Project - T. Michalski asked if anyone present wished to speak on the proposed “The Docks” development that had originally been on the agenda but was withdrawn. No one wished to speak.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

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